

COUNTY OF OAKLAND
OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

MICHAEL J. BOUCHARD



March 9, 2011

The Honorable John Walsh
Chairman, Michigan House Judiciary Committee
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, Michigan 48909

RE: OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL (HB) 4349

Dear Representative Walsh and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in opposition to HB 4349 in its current form. With police budgets on a rapid decline, forfeiture dollars help with necessary purchases and assist with important program needs, specifically as they relate to anti-drug efforts. The redistribution of these funds creates an unnecessary burden for local law enforcement agencies and should not be considered as a discretionary revenue source.

Currently, drug forfeiture dollars are seized and recycled back into the community in the form of additional tools to combat the war on drugs. A connection can certainly be made between drug trafficking and terrorism as well as violent crimes, gangs and a myriad of other offenses which threaten the public safety of the very communities we serve. These dollars should not be seen as a new source for annual wages and benefits as they are currently used to equip and train officers to safeguard our streets and neighborhoods from drugs and the many dangers associated with them.

Also, a change to view forfeiture monies for salaries could create an improper incentive for officers to feel they have to seize to fund positions. Forfeiture dollars are unpredictable from year to year and should not be counted on for annual staff budgets. The current law allows law enforcement to use the forfeiture monies to enhance law enforcement now. Making this an existing pot available to fund other things is unnecessary and bad public policy.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this issue. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance on this issue or any other that impacts Michigan law enforcement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Bouchard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael J. Bouchard
OAKLAND COUNTY SHERIFF

Cc: Members of the Michigan House Judiciary Committee
Members of the Oakland County Delegation

1200 N TELEGRAPH RD * BUILDING 38 EAST * PONTIAC MI 48341-1044